

Disabled women, more than any other grouping, have been excluded from educational and vocational skills training programmes, material and financial assistance and work opportunities. At the same time they have difficulty in fulfilling home-making roles too. They are often over-protected or neglected by their families, so cannot fulfil traditional female roles in the home or subsistence activities, and their marriageability is low.

Measures suggested to improve the position of disabled women include proposals for more focused research; for extended action programmes at different levels to improve the status of women and of the disabled; recommendations specifically on vocational rehabilitation, and proposals for changing attitudes of the general public and of disabled women themselves. It is argued that improvements in the status, education, training and employment of women in general will have repercussions for disabled women in particular.

Whilst having too broad a focus to provide very much practical detail and example in the analysis, the monograph nevertheless makes a useful and readable contribution to the subject of women and disability by highlighting the extent of the neglect, and encouraging a more developed sensitivity to the needs and rights of disabled women — and indeed, of women in general. Points are made clearly and concisely, and a manageable and up to date bibliography is provided for further reference. It also makes the essential point that disabled women themselves need to be included and actively involved in the struggle for recognition and improved life chances.

In summary, this is a brief but valuable introduction to a much neglected subject.

Reviewed by Helen Jackson, School of Social Work, Harare.

**The Importance of People — Experiences, lessons and ideas on rural development training in Zimbabwe: Hlekweni and beyond**, Martin de Graaf (Editor) and Brigid Willmore (Assistant Editor), Hlekweni FRSC, Bulawayo, 1987 (191pp, Z\$8 plus s/tax).

In 1987, Hlekweni Friends Rural Service Centre celebrated its 20th anniversary. Besides an Open Day at the Centre, Hlekweni staff, past and present, in collaboration with the Centre's friends and supporters, decided to produce a publication, as a more permanent tribute to the Centre and the people it serves. **The Importance of People** not only tells the story of Hlekweni and the philosophy behind it, but includes several contributions discussing current rural development training in Zimbabwe. Whilst Hlekweni is the starting point, the book as a whole provides a broader look at some aspects of development, and of training for development, throughout the country, with particular emphasis on the role and work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Part One of the book focuses on Hlekweni itself — the history, the idea and the context. We follow, through the five directors in post since 1967, the changes in the work of the Centre in the context of the changing political situation during the struggle for liberation, and into the early years of Independence. Based on a philosophy of service to its constituents — the people of Matabeleland — training was organised in response to the needs of the trainees and was geared towards learning relevant to the improvement of rural life, with particular emphasis on agriculture.

We see, though, how the concepts of extension work, follow-up and flexibility in programming, whilst initially a response to the social and environmental upheaval during the liberation struggle, were eventually modified by those very factors, although management and personnel problems also played a role. The increasing isolation of the Centre — from other Centres and programmes, and from the people it was established to serve — has continued into the post-independence years, as a result of the current security situation in the south of the country.

A participatory evaluation in 1985 recommended the way forward for Hlekweni, in terms of regaining the original commitment to service, dialogue, flexibility and full involvement in the local community. As de Graaf, Hussey and Ncube indicate, in their brief overview of Zimbabwe with particular reference to Matabeleland, development in the region remains hampered by the effects of long-term drought, the lack of peace and political stability, and an under-estimation of the community's ability to articulate its own needs. It is no doubt hoped that the recently negotiated unity accord will 'open up' Matabeleland again, allowing development to proceed. The practicalities of how Hlekweni will fulfil a meaningful role within this development are not, however, spelt out. Maybe this is because Hlekweni has stopped listening to its constituents; perhaps because it is pursuing a 'strategy' rather than responding to a 'need'.

If this is the case, the Centre will be in good company with most of the authors who contribute to Parts Two and Three of the book. As one goes from one contribution to the next — firstly in Part Two on "Training for Rural Development: Strategy" and in Part Three on "Training for Rural Development: Some Issues" — a number of questions spring to mind, and the lack of answers becomes increasingly frustrating:

- what exactly is a training 'strategy', and if people are important, how important are they relative to strategy?
- if people are important, how important are they relative to 'target groups'? (my understanding of a target is something which is shot at)
- having defined a growing diversity of target groups through reference to various lowest common denominators (as per the contribution by Kidd and Kelly on training farmers in Binga), what are we to say to those who are no longer targeted (being shot at)? What are they going to say to us?

Are they now less important as people?

— if people are important, why do they not have much of a say in the case histories which the authors discuss?

— why does the reader increasingly get the impression that training is something one 'does' to people, however hard the well-intentioned try to 'do' it?

In his contribution in Part Four — "Who Calls the Tune — Training in a Changing Environment" — de Graaf raises some of these questions but never really concludes them. Other contributors — for example, those who discuss appropriate technology, networking and the relationship between donor agencies and recipient organisations — touch on similar as well as other problematic areas, but, again, in a somewhat irresolute manner.

All the contributors stress the need to involve, motivate, conscientise, empower, network with and listen to trainees — they variously describe how training centres must proceed about their training in a fundamentally participatory and democratic manner (as Hlekweni has endeavoured to do). But one major question remains unanswered, as far as I can see. Can a training centre, given its very nature as an institution, as an organisation, comprised of buildings, timetables, staff, menus and mealtimes, structures and a physical and geographical rootedness, ever hope to achieve this ideal? Probably not; and sadly the book does not give us one practical example of how a training centre has managed to break the mould, as it were. Perhaps that was not its purpose — but so many contributions relating to theories of training and development would have been well off-set by some papers describing real-life efforts to make people important in the manner prescribed by those theories.

I am not a trainer, although I find myself 'doing' it from time to time. Perhaps, therefore, I am over-critical of a publication in which trainers may find the scope of the discussion and the issues raised of use in thinking about their approach to their work. All of us with a commitment to development in this country, however, should congratulate and thank our colleagues who contributed to this book for doing what the rest of us never get around to — putting pen to paper, opening up the debate and drawing together the issues on the agenda. Hopefully this is the first of many Zimbabwean publications about Zimbabwean development.

Reviewed by Frances Chinemana, Freelance Consultant, Harare.

**The Politics of Hunger (The Global Food System)**, John W Warnock, Methuen & Co London (no price given).

This is an excellent reference book for anyone interested in knowing why, despite all the advances in science and technology, hunger is still present in all countries including highly industrialised capitalist societies. The book